

Unexpected

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Summary: Set almost a year after the events of the movie. Hiccup, Astrid, and the rest of the riders have heard rumors of hostile dragons in a village on the other side of the continent. They go to explore this, but something goes very wrong very fast. Will Hiccup and Astrid be able to figure this one out? ***Picture is "Romantic Flight" by Detkef***

1. A Disturbance in the Night

Hey guys. This is the first fanfiction that I've ever written, so I'd be much obliged if you tell me how I'm doing (formatting counts).

Enjoy.

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><p>CHAPTER 1: A DISTURBANCE IN THE NIGHT<p>

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><p>The moonlight gleamed down upon the last remnants of the small campfire that had burned out an hour before. Toothless lay wrapped around the warm coals; Hiccup cocooned in his wings and Astrid curled in her sleeping roll nearby. They had decided to camp in the small clearing for the night, taking a much needed rest from their pursuit of a possibly hostile dragon and its den.<p>

The couple - and Toothless - had left Berk with the rest of the riders, but had eventually decided that it would be best if they scouted out the surrounding territory. The possibility of there being more dragons that were hostile to Vikings was bad enough. Walking right into one without realising it would be much, much worse.

A twig snapped in the distance, causing Astrid to wake with a start.

She slithered out of her sleeping roll trying to make as little noise as possible, so as not to wake Hiccup... She did so unsuccessfully.

"What's wrong?" he asked, somewhat exasperated that he had been woken so suddenly.

"I'm not sure. I'm probably just hearing things."

"Probably," he said, rolling back under Toothless's wing.

Astrid shot a glance at him and pulled him up, making sure not to be careful. She walked towards the woods. Another twig broke, closer this time. They froze; Astrid's hand grasped for Hiccup's instinctively. The bushes rustled violently after a short time, a figure trying awkwardly to get free from its entangling branches. Toothless, having followed them after being woken by the commotion, now growled menacingly at the shaking bush.

"_Finally_!" exclaimed a vaguely familiar voice as the large figure freed itself from the bush. The figure took one step forward and suddenly stumbled into the moonlight.

"Fishlegs?!" Hiccup and Astrid declared, utterly confused, simultaneously.

"Uh... Hi guys," Fishlegs said cheerily.

"Wh-what are you doing here?!" Astrid interrogated, staring at him with bewilderment.

"Oh nothing. I just followed you here so I could help out if it was a dragon we've never seen before." he said casually. "Look! I even brought Meatlug" gesturing to the lazy gronckle that was now flying in ever so slowly. "Oh... and uh... is it alright if I camp with you guys now?"

"You don't really have a choice now, do you?" Hiccup said in his rhetorical manner.

"Why'd you _follow_us anyways?!" Astrid questioned him.

"Oh... well I... uhh..." he started before blurting out, "I just wanted to make sure that you'd be all right by yourselves, what with the dragons and everything."

"Fishlegs," Astrid began, somewhat annoyed by him now, "we can handle ourselves perfectly well."

"So I can camp with you then?" Fishlegs asked cheerily.

"Yes!" both Hiccup and Astrid yelled simultaneously, laughing lightly at doing so.

With this the three settled in for the rest of the night. Hiccup curled up under Toothless's wing, Astrid returned to her sleeping roll, and Fishlegs slept on a soft patch of grass, resting his head on Meatlug.

* * *

><p>Long after the rest of them had fallen asleep, Astrid found herself not being able to. She was not restless, but she felt like she was 'missing' something. She slithered out of her sleeping roll and crept towards Toothless, trying desperately not to wake him. Hiccup's head was poking out from under the wing.<p>

"Hiccup," she whispered. "Hiccup!"

He opened his eyes sleepily, "Astrid? What's wrong?"

"I can't sleep."

Toothless stirred slightly, but slept on.

"Obviously." Hiccup began to sit up, now leaning on his elbows, "Why not?"

"I'm cold," she lied, not knowing what else to say or even what was actually wrong.

"Here," he said, throwing her a blanket from the nearby pack.

Astrid let the blanket fall beside her. "Not _that _kind of cold."

"What other kind of cold is there?!" Hiccup asked, utterly confused now.

"Can I...?" she asked, gesturing underneath Toothless's wing and realizing what she wanted - what she _needed_.

"Uhhh... sure?" thinking she might need something from the pack.

Toothless rolled away from his spot as Astrid approached, having been uncomfortable with Hiccup digging his elbows into him.

Astrid giggled as she grabbed the blanket from the ground. She threw it on Hiccup and then, much to Hiccup's surprise, she laid down next to him and crawled underneath the blanket.

"What are y-," he started, interrupted by Astrid

"I'm still cold."

Hiccup started to reach for the pack.

"No."

Hiccup, finally realizing what she meant, laid back down and wrapped his arms around her. At this, a nearly inaudible sound of pleasure escaped Astrid.

"Hiccup?"

"Hmh?" He breathed, almost asleep.

"I love you." Astrid closed her eyes. Drifting off to sleep.

"I... love you too." He said ethereally, but somewhat awkwardly.

Astrid giggled, and that was her last memory of the night.

* * *

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Please review, I need it.

**I'll post the next chapter as soon as I have time to sit down and type it. (I prefer to handwrite stuff before I edit it.)

>The next chapters will be longer, I promise... this was supposed to be a prologue, but I changed my mind after I got about halfway through, and that's when I added Fishlegs. This was originally supposed to be just the night sequence after Fishlegs came around.**

2. The Woods

Hey guys. I just want to let you know now that I'm not going to post chapter 3 until September 12 or 13. After I release chapter 3 it will be on a biweekly schedule on either Wednesdays or Thursdays, depending on when I release chapter 3.

In the meantime: enjoy!

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><p>CHAPTER 2: THE WOODS<p>

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><p>Hiccup opened his eyes begrudgingly, wanting to know why he was waking up so early. "Nnnngg," he groaned, rubbing his eyes tiredly. Astrid giggled at his morning slowness. Hiccup's eyes popped open at the sound, having forgotten the previous night's events.<p>

"Good morning, sleepy-head," Astrid doted cheerfully, beginning to get up.

"Good morning," Hiccup replied in a low, tired mumble.

Astrid was now digging vigorously through the pack.

"What are you doing?" Hiccup questioned, propping himself up on his elbows trying desperately not to fall asleep again.

"Oh, nothing." A mischievous grin glued itself on her face.

"That sure doesn't look like nothi-" he started before being interrupted by a sudden splash of cold water.

Hiccup bolted up almost instantaneously, gasping from the sudden burst of cold now surging through his body. Toothless, now awake because of the commotion, looked at the two of them curiously. Astrid was giggling at the face that the now-fully-awake Hiccup was

making.

An idea began to form in his mind. "Well, I guess you got me," he said in his usual sarcastic tone. He started to get up, Astrid still laughing. He shook his head violently, sending water droplets through the air; foreshadowing what he did next. He turned toward Astrid and darted towards her faster than he thought he could.

"Ah!" she screamed, running away from him knowing that he was trying to get her wet.

"Oh no you don't!" he yelled playfully, chasing her into the woods.

Toothless watched as Hiccup chased Astrid back and forth and through the woods, not understanding their new game. He watched them until they ran out of his sight and he laid back down.

Hiccup continued to chase Astrid, both laughing at the fun they were having, until he tripped on his prosthesis. Astrid ran back to him hoping that he had not hurt himself. She held out a hand to help him up, but that was a mistake.

"Hah!" Hiccup half grunted, half yelled as he used her hand to pull himself up and pounce on her.

"H-h-hey," she said, barely holding back her laughter enough to say that.

They both laughed hysterically as they rolled over each other down a large hill. As they got up and brushed themselves off, the laughter beginning to subside now, Astrid realized something.

"Hiccup?" Astrid called out to him, sounding very concerned. "Where are we?"

* * *

><p>Toothless drifted back to sleep as they left. He awoke a few hours later; to his surprise, neither Hiccup nor Astrid were anywhere in sight.<p>

He went over to the still-soundly-sleeping Fishlegs and Meatlug. Toothless, now very worried, nudged Fishlegs. The boy woke with a rather large yawn, while Meatlug slept on.

"What's the matter, Toothless?" Fishlegs asked, wondering why he woke him.

Toothless let out a low, rumbling moan and looked back where Astrid's sleeping roll still lay.

Fishlegs looked around for a moment before realising that hiccup and Astrid were gone.

"Wha-whe - Toothless, did you see which way they went?!"

Toothless pointed his head towards the part of the woods he last saw them run into, but he was afraid that they may have derailed from the straight path he was assuming they took.

Fishlegs set off into the woods with Toothless following shortly behind. Meatlug, being the lazy dragon she was, slept soundly at the camp.

* * *

><p>Hiccup leafed through his journal, frantically looking for the map he had drawn of the area when they first decided to camp there. At last he found it, but his hopes soon dwindled. He did not recognize the area at all; he did not see the hill they had rolled down.<p>

"Astrid," he could not bear what he was saying, "I have no idea where we are."

"Just think for a minute," she could not give up, not yet. "We came down that hill, so obviously we should go back up. And we couldn't have gone too far; we weren't running that fast and we've only been gone for a couple hours, most of it was spent right here trying to figure out where we are. If we just . . ."

"Astrid," he called out.

". . . go back in the direction we came from, then . . ." she continued, either not hearing or ignoring him.

"Astrid," louder this time.

". . . eventually, we should . . ." she rambled on.

"Astrid!" almost screaming now.

"What?!" she yelled, her voice cracking slightly.

Hiccup thought he could see tears swelling in her eyes. "Astrid," he said comfortingly, grabbing her firmly by the shoulders, "it's going to be all right. We'll find our way back. I know we will."

Astrid broke down at this and hugged him tightly. "But what if we don't?" she asked between bursts of tears. "What if we never get to see Berk or any of our friends or family again."

"That's not going to happen; I won't let it happen," he reassured her, but, in reality, he was beginning to doubt it himself.

The two of them climbed the hill and looked into the woods. Hiccup could see where they had left some tracks, but he knew they wouldn't continue very far.

They went back into the woods, following their tracks as far as they could until they stopped. They looked around at the surrounding area. Astrid thought she could remember it, but it was very vague. They were surrounded on all sides by sparingly placed trees and thickets of brambles, berry bushes, and other shrubbery.

They could see the remnants of woodland life, but no signs of themselves. They began to wonder if they had taken a wrong turn. The trees continued on for as long as they could see, and no paths or creeks seemed to lead out of the area. The duo ventured on for a

while longer before Astrid plunked herself down on a rotting log.

"Hiccup, what are we going to do?"

"The only thing we can: keep going until we see something familiar or find a way to get out of these woods."

Astrid sighed and let herself roll onto the ground. She had given up.

"Astrid, it's going to be alright. We'll find our way out of the woods and we'll see our families again."

Unbeknownst to them, they were not only going deeper into uncharted woods; they were being followed. They were being watched. They were being studied.

* * *

><p>I just want to ask: would you guys rather it be formatted as a modern novel or how it is? Please review.

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3. Skuld

Alright. Sorry it took me so long to update. I wanted to take my time to make chapter 3 as good as I possibly could, and to write ahead a little bit so I can stay on a nice schedule. I hope you enjoy the story. (P.S. This will be the average length of chapters from now on.)

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><p>CHAPTER 3: SKULD

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><p>Toothless trudged through the woods looking for his companion. As smart as Toothless was, he couldn't follow a trail by scent or sight. Fishlegs was no tracker either, and he was very tired from the walking. As a matter of fact, Fishlegs was now riding Toothless. They would have flown, but Fishlegs had no idea how to operate Toothless's prosthetic tailâ€"fin, so they trudged on.<p>

"Toothless," Fishlegs asked, "are you sure we're going the right way?"

Toothless let out a low, gurgling moan. _No._

"We should probably go back to camp. They might have found their way back, and Meatlug's probably worried."

Toothless moaned again, and then turned back towards the camp. Maybe Fishlegs was right. Maybe they were back at the camp, waiting for them. But he knew better. He knew they were still lost.

* * *

><p>Hiccup and Astrid now realized how hungry they were. They had not eaten breakfast and it was now about an hour before the sun reached its zenith.<p>

"Hiccup," Astrid looked at him, her stomach growling, "we need to find some food, and we need to do it soon."

"I know," he groaned, hunger surging through his body, "but I'm not exactly an expert when it comes to wilderness survival." Every 10-12 year-old in Berk learned a little bit about surviving in the wilderness, but not much.

"But you do know _something_! Don't you?"

"Not much more than you do." Toothless had taught him how to treat minor wounds, but that was all.

"What are we going to do?!" Astrid pleaded, beginning to cry again.

"It's going to be all right, Astrid," Hiccup hugged her and held her for a while, and time passed ever so slowly.

* * *

><p>"What's taking him so long?!" Snotlout broke the silence, causing Tuffnut to choke on his fish and Hookfang to burst into flames. Barf and Belch stared at him, confused. The zippieback didn't care to find out what the noise was. "All he had to do was find Hiccup and Astrid and come back with them so they didn't kill themselves! Now it's-"
he glanced up, "an hour past noon and he's not back yet."<p>

"They're probably . . . you know-"
Tuffnut puckered his lips and kissed the air several times; he and Ruffnut laughing obnoxiously.

Snotlout laughed too, now forgetting about the topic he had brought up. He took another bite of fish and began conversing with the twins. The day drifted on as everyone allowed the thought to pass their minds, not realizing the true nature of the situation. They allowed themselves to fall into an endless abyss. Only one escape gleaming through the darkness, yet invisible to the eyes of many.

* * *

><p>"Finally!" Hiccup exclaimed, bursting out of the woods into a large, grassy plane.<p>

"'Finally!' what?!" Astrid yelled back at him. "We've gone from one endless expanse to another. Sometimes I think you jus-"

"Look!" Hiccup pointed, pulling her towards him in order to give her a better view.

A few small houses dotted the horizon about seven miles away.

Astrid suddenly punched Hiccup in the arm, "_That's_ for getting me

lost." She pulled him by the collar and kissed him for a while,
"That's for . . ."

". . . everything else." he finished for her. Astrid smiled at this and gave him another little peck.

They ran, fairly fast (for people who hadn't eaten for more than twelve hours), towards the small village. They knew that it would be their one and only salvation.

As they approached the village, Hiccup realized something. He stopped midstride, almost falling forward because of his momentum. Astrid stopped a few feet in front of him, looking back.

"What's wrong?" she asked. "What do you see?"

"Nothing," Hiccup stared past her, into the village. "I don't see anything."

"Then what's wrong?"

"I don't see anyone. There are no people or anything in the entire village," he stared, not blinking, in disbelief.

"Maybe they're all inside for some reason," Astrid pointed out.

"Or maybe they abandoned the village because of the dragon!" Hiccup was growing more and more irritated as the situation carried on.
"Maybe it killed all of them!"

"Hiccup! Calm down!"

"I am calm," he said through clenched teeth.

"Hiccup, I've never seen you like this," she said in a more relaxing way now. "Just try to calm down. Take a deep breath."

He did. His mind started to clear.

"Now just think"

"Sh," he hushed her, putting a finger to his lips.

"Don't shush me!" Astrid was astounded. Never before had she been . . .

"Listen!"

"What! I don't hear"

"Just LISTEN!" he almost screamed.

She did. She heard short, quiet puffs off in the not too distant woods. It was a much too familiar sound.

"Dragon" they said simultaneously, looking at each other in disbelief.

The couple broke for the village, sprinting as hard as they possibly could. Their feet pounded at the ground, each step propelling them

ever closer to the village. The wingbeat grew louder, louder, louder; the village closer, closer, closer. And then all sound became muted for the duo, their focus solely on reaching the village in time.

They could see nothing but the village. Their legs pounded harder than they ever had before. They could hear nothing but the beats of the dragon's wings.

Driven by fear, and fear alone, they carried on. Louder, louder, louder; closer, closer, closer.

They failed to notice the surge of people erupting from the houses before them. Soldiers rushed them with swords drawn; archers now dotted the rooftops, arrows nocked in fine oaken longbows. A slew of arrows flew from the buildings, headed straight towards the dragon that was now directly behind the two wanderers. The chilling cries that followed were left unheard by the duo, their focus was too great.

The beast fell dead with a great scream. The scream, too, was unheard by both Hiccup and Astrid.

This, however, seemed to trigger all of the subconscious realizations to surge forward into the couple's conscious minds. This, in turn, triggered a bout of vertigo for the two. Hiccup collapsed, gasping for air. Astrid realized that they had indeed reached the village, and caught herself and the wall of a nearby hut.

A man ran towards them. He wore a dark flowing cloak, hood flapping around on his back as he jogged. "Are you alright?!" he called.

Astrid was the one to answer, Hiccup still collapsed on the ground. "Weâ€"wâ€"we're fine," she said between gasps.

Hiccup let out a loud moan of agreeance.

"Are you sure?" the strange, cloaked man asked.

Astrid took a moment to gather herself in entirety. "Yes," she helped Hiccup to his feet, "we're sure."

"Is there anywhere that we can get something to eat though?" Astrid asked, her stomach growling audibly.

"Wait," Hiccup held out an arm in front of her as she started for the building the man was pointing to. "First things first: where are we?"

"Why, we are in the fine village of Skuld, of course," the sound of his voice seemed to imply that he was smiling, but it could not be seen if he really was.

"And where exactly is that?" Astrid questioned him.

"We are to the south of Urda and the west of Verdandi," he elaborated. "But you seem to have come from the west, yet from where?"

"We travel from the isle of Berk," Hiccup answered, proud of his home.

"I am not familiar with the name, but you said it was an isle?"

"Yes," Hiccup answered, almost stating it as a question.

"How is it that you two have come so far inland. . ." the man paused, allowing a sense of fatefulness to fill the air, ". . . _alone_?"

Hiccup thought he saw the shadow of a grin as the ominous man said this. He glanced at Astrid, asking her silently: _what should I say?_

"The details aren't important," Astrid spluttered. "Now," she shot a glance at Hiccup, "if _you _don't mind, I'd like to go get something to eat."

"Hold on. I want toâ€"

"_Now_!"

"Okay, okay!" Hiccup acquiesced.

They pushed through the doors of a small mess hall. The building was no larger than Hiccup's own home and was dotted with small tables. There was also a bar on the far right side of the main room. Hiccup could see a staircase leading to a few bedrooms upstairs. All in all, the building seemed to be more of a tavern than a meeting hall.

Hiccup walked up to the bar while Astrid took a seat. "Can we have something to eat, sir?"

"That'll be 3 silver piecesâ€"each," The barkeep answered begrudgingly.

"Alright, I'll have one then," Hiccup said, pulling the money out of his bag. "How much for a room?"

"Depends on how long," he eyed the boy standing in front of him and the girl sitting at the far table.

"Just for tonight."

"That'll be another 5 pieces."

Hiccup sighed and handed over the 8 silver pieces. He only had 3 pieces left, and he might need them to get back home.

Hiccup walked back to the table Astrid had sat down at. "It's not much," he said as he sat down with their food, "but it's something."

"Why'd you only get one?"

"It costs too much; we may need money to get back home."

"Hiccup, you need to eat something."

"Astrid, I'll be fine. Just eat it."

Astrid cut the lamb in front of her in half and handed half of it to Hiccup. "Eat," she said.

Hiccup, in turn, cut that piece in half and handed half of that back to her. "Fine, but you need it more than I do."

Astrid sighed and started eating what she had; Hiccup what he had.

After a few minutes, the cloaked man from the village entrance walked in through the door and sat down across from them.

"You are enjoying the meal, I take it?" he said. If he had grinned, it could not be seen; his hood darkening his face.

Hiccup and Astrid only gawked at him.

"I will only ask of you but one simple thing: you will meet me at the temple tonight after dark. It is located on top of the hill just to the south of the village. I will be waiting." And with this he rose, not even allowing either of the two to speak before doing so. In the most fluid movements they had ever seen, he walked to, and through, the door with the utmost delicacy and precision.

"Who do you think that guy is?" Astrid asked Hiccup in a hushed tone.

"Well, he definitely _isn't _the chief. He might be a priest of some kind though. I'm almost certain that no one else would have enough dedication to move like that."

"I don't think we can trust him," Astrid took another bite.

"I'm not sure, but we don't really have a choice, do we?"

"We could leave," Astrid remonstrated.

"And go where? We don't even know where exactly we are."

"He mentioned two other villages before; Verdandi to the east and Urda to the north," she pointed out.

"But we don't know how far away they are. They could be hundreds of miles away for all we know."

"I say we go to the temple," Hiccup continued.

"Well, we should ask around town about him and the temple first." Astrid added. "But I'm still not so sure about this."

"Astrid, we'll be fine," he smiled and finished off his lamb.

"If you think so," she sighed.

"Now, let's go look at that dragon," Hiccup got up and pushed his plate aside.

* * *

><p>Toothless sniffed the air again, trying to pick his companions' scent out of the air. He padded along the ground quietly as he did so.<p>

"Hiccup?! Astrid?!" Fishlegs shouted. "Where are you guys?!"

Toothless let out a low moan and collapsed onto the ground, staring off into the distance. He sighed loudly.

The sun was now beginning to set and they had decided to begin searching the large expanse of the plane before them, hoping to find some trace of civilization that Hiccup and Astrid may have found.

"Don't worry Toothless, we'll find them."

A gurgling sound was now emanating from the dragon's chest. Fishlegs patted his side to comfort him. They were both very tired now; they had been searching since that afternoon.

Toothless closed his eyes and sighed again, drifting off to sleep. Fishlegs lay down by his side and did the same.

What neither of them had realized was that they were going the wrong direction. They were fast approaching Verdandi, rather than Skuld.

* * *

><p>Hiccup stared at the dead dragon's body in disbelief. "I've never seen anything like this before!" He sketched it fastidiously, yet neatly nonetheless, in his journal.<p>

The beast had a long, muscular neck. Its body was a vast expanse of muscle. It had four, clawed toes on each of its four feet. Its tail extended out for about 3 meters. Spikes ran all up its tail and back as well. Its head was long, and narrow; eyes set back behind a thick, bony snout. The beast also had large, wingâ€"like frills behind each of its ear holes.

"If this is what we've been hearing about, then where did it come from?"

Hiccup gave her an astounded look, "I have no idea."

Little did anyone know: the events that had been put in motion would trigger something much more sinister than anything any of them had ever faced before.

* * *

><p>I hope you enjoyed it. Please review (whether you liked it or not, I need to know how I'm doing). My next update will be next week on Thursday-Saturday, I'm not going to make you guys wait forever again . . . that would be cruel.

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to Train Your Dragon or DreamWorks Animation SKGÂ®_

4. Verdandi

Sorry I was late. My internet was down and I just got it back up. Next update will be on 10/3. Sorry for the long wait this time, I'm being pounded with homework right now and I don't have much time to write or type right now, sorry. Enjoy.

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><p>CHAPTER 4: VERDANDI<p>

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><p>The sun was setting; the last remnants of daylight now fading away. Hiccup lay on his and Astrid's bed, waiting for twilight to come so that they could leave for the temple. "I almost forgot how nice it is to lie down in a bed after a long day," Hiccup said.<p>

Astrid was sitting on the edge of the bed combing her fingers through her hair. "Yeah" she replied distantly.

"What are you thinking about?" Hiccup asked her as he propped himself up.

"Hm? Ohâ€¦ nothing, justâ€¦" she stopped.

"'Just' what?" Hiccup smiled a little, not even realizing that he was.

"I don't know." She blushed slightly.

"Go on, you can tell me." Hiccup was smiling even more now, but he didn't quite know why. Something about talking with Astrid like this just made him feel warm inside.

"I'm thinking about us," she said, blushing profusely.

"What do you mean?"

"You know _exactly_ what I mean," she said sleepily.

Hiccup got up and sat next to her on the end of the bed. They looked into each other's eyes longingly. Hiccup brushed Astrid's bangs out of her face. Astrid took comfort in the feeling of Hiccups hand on her cheek. Hiccup leaned in closer to her and kissed her, time seeming to slow to a near stop.

They parted and Astrid hugged Hiccup for a few moments before planting another, short kiss on his lips. "I love you, Hiccup," she whispered delicately.

"I love you too," he responded. Astrid smiled at him.

Hiccup looked out the window; it was twilight. "We should go," he decided at noticing this. "We need to see what hits guy has to say."

"I'm still not so sure about this. Can't we just stay here?" Astrid pleaded.

"We have to. This is the only way that we're ever going to find out what's going on and how we can get home," Hiccup retorted. "You don't have to come if you don't want to."

"You're not going alone," she said sternly. She liked his newfound confidence, but she would never forgive herself if something happened to him.

Hiccup clipped his dagger to his belt and opened the door. Astrid grabbed her battle-axe and followed him out. And so they walked into the night, headed for the temple in the south.

* * *

><p>Ruffnut sat next to a dwindling campfire. Snotlout sat on a log across from her. Tuffnut had gone, after a very heated argument, into the woods to get some more wood for the fire.<p>

"So, Snotlout, wheâ€"

"Hm? Oh, what?" he looked up at her, caught off guard.

"â€"where do you think they are?" she asked him.

"What? Where who are?" Snotlout was still coming out of his daydream.

"Who do you think, stupid?!"

"Oh. Yeah. Riiightâ€"

Ruffnut stared at him blankly.

"â€"I don't know," he blurted out without even thinking about it. "Maybe Fishlegs just couldn't make them come back."

"Right, but where'd he go?" Ruffnut asked him.

"Maybe he stayed with them," he said. "Why? Do you like him or something? No, I bet you like Hiccup, don't you." Snotlout grinned obnoxiously.

Deep down this hurt Ruffnut. She had 'liked' Hiccup once, but not nowâ€"now she had her sights set on someone else. "NO!" she yelled in response.

"Oh yes you do. Admit it."

"I do not! Not him anyways."

"Fishlegs?!" Snotlout yelled in disbelief.

"Ew! No! Gross!"

"Whatever," Snotlout said. "Where's your brother? Waitâ€| is it him?!"

"I'm gonna kill you!" she screamed as she jumped up towards him. "I'm gonna rip your head off and feed it to Barf!"

"Hey, hey, hey! I'm just kidding!" Snotlout surrendered.

The Zippleback picked up its heads at the sound of one of its names; Hookfang slept on.

"Fine," she sat back down, next to him now. She got a strange feeling in her stomach as she did so, but, somehow, it was strange in a good way. She smiled slightly without realizing it.

"What are you so happy about?" Snotlout asked when he noticed the smile now creeping its way across her face.

"Hm? Nothing," she said, trying desperately to rid herself of the grin.

"Whatever. What's taking your brother so long?"

"How in Thor's name should I know?"

* * *

><p>Tuffnut continued collecting a multitude of twigs and the such, not wanting to carry anything heavier than that. He kept pacing around, waiting for Snotlout and Ruffnut to stop yelling. He didn't care about what they were yelling about, but he knew he wouldn't want to be caught in the middle of it.<p>

He looked around on the ground for some more twigs, waiting for the yelling to stop before he went back. He kneeled down and picked up a few twigs. As he got back up, he noticed something. The woods seemed to be thinning out little by little, and he thought he could see a large, grassy hill off in the distance.

Tuffnut dropped everything he was carrying and ran back towards the camp. "Guys! Guys!" he yelled as he ran.

Snotlout and Ruffnut were still arguing about who-knew-what when they heard the yelling from the words.

"Wait," Snotlout quieted Ruffnut, "what's that?"

They both listened for a short while.

"Guys! Guuuys!"

"Tuffnut?! What do you want?!" Ruffnut asked.

"Come here. Follow me," Tuffnut panted as he burst into the clearing they had camped in.

"What is it?" Snotlout questioned him.

"The woodsâ€"end. There'sâ€"a bigâ€"hillâ€"with grassâ€"andâ€"everything," he choked out between gasps.

"What?" Ruffnut said confused

"Justâ€"follow me." Tuffnut ran out into the woods.

Snotlout ran after him, and Ruffnut followed shortly behind.

* * *

><p>Toothless plodded over the grass sadly. Night would soon be upon them and they had found no trace of either Hiccup or Astrid.<p>

The two of them had traveled many miles over the prairie by now without any trace of civilization whatsoever as well.

Fishlegs had been struggling to stay awake for the past half an hour, but Toothless carried on, driven by his desperation.

Suddenly, Toothless flinched, jolting Fishlegs awake.

"Huh! Whatâ€"Toothless, what is it?" Fishlegs uttered incoherently.

Toothless stuck his head forward and sniffed the air rapidly.

"What is it, what do you smell?" Fishlegs asked him, fully awake now. "Is it Hiccup?"

At this, Toothless barked and sprinted off into the distance. Fishlegs held on for dear life. Toothless knew that it wasn't Hiccup or Astrid that he had smelled, but it was something that might lead to them; he smelled people. He smelled the sweet, salty smell of human sweat. He smelled the war, intoxicating smell of fresh bread. He smelled a whole town out here in the prairie.

Toothless ran as fast as he could, leaping a few yards every now and then. Fishlegs could see the town now, as much as its image was jerking up and down in front of him. Toothless, however, did not even notice it; he was still following the scent instead.

As the two of them neared the village, Fishlegs was able to choke out, "Slow down boy! We're pretty much there already. Besides, these people probably aren't used to seeing dragons all the time; we don't want to scare them."

Toothless jerked himself to a stop when he heard this, almost sending Fishlegs soaring over his head. He continued sauntering on towards the town now, realizing that what Fishlegs had said was true: these people were probably not as accustomed to seeing dragons as the people of Berk were.

Toothless walked the two of them into town, and, much to their surprise, no one did as much as turn their head to look at the dragon and its rider. It was as though they were not even in the village.

Only moments later, they noticed people's heads turning, looking directly behind the recent arrivals; gawking at the space that they had just walked through only moments before.

The more they walked through the village, the more they realized that that people were reacting to almost _everything _that the two of them

did with a few moments after the fact.

Fishlegs found the local tavern after about ten minutes of wandering around the village. "Toothless, stay here while I ask around to see if anyone's seen Hiccup or Astrid around here somewhere," he explained.

Toothless snorted_. Fine_.

Fishlegs opened the heavy door and let it slam behind him. He noticed that no one jumped until a few moments after the sound reverberated through the small, condensed room. It seemed like there was less lag time than before, but he couldn't tell for sure.

He looked around for a while, deciding where he should start asking. He walked up to the bar and looked at the bartender. "Excuse me," he said.

The barkeep continued his work, seeming to not even notice the boy almost directly in front of him. Just before Fishlegs was about to call for attention again, the bartender looked up with a big, inviting grin. "How can I help you?" he asked warmly.

"Uhhhâ€|" Fishlegs blinked rapidly a few times to regain focus. "Have there been any strangers passing through here recently. They would be about my age. A girl with long, blond hair tied back into a singly braid, and a boy with medium-length, brown hair and a prosthetic leg."

"I haven't seen anyone like that lately," the bartender replied, with significantly less lag than before.

"One other thing:" Fishlegs started before turning away, "why does everyone react so slowly to everything?"

"I don't understâ€"wait... you're new in town, aren't you,"

He replied.

"I don't see what that would have to do with anything."

Fishlegs did not notice, but the bartender was now responding in real-time now, "Wellâ€"on, you don't care to hear my old stories."

"Yes, I do! Tell me," Fishlegs said eagerly.

"You may want to take a seat then," he said, leading Fishlegs over to a table in the corner of the tavern.

"You see, a very long time agoâ€"longer than anyone cares to recallâ€"three mysterious men came to the town of Urda, not too far to the northeast. Each of the men wore a single black robe that flowed over their arms and their legs. They each wore a hood as well, draping it over their faces so that no part of their bodies could be seen by the townspeople.

"These men walked into the dead center of the town and stood facing each other. They grasped each others' hands and raised them in harmony. As they did so, their voices rose in chant. The words they

spoke are unfamiliar to any and all that have ever heard them, but according to a few magi that have passed through, they seem to have been draconic in nature, and they left a lasting scar over the spot over which they had been spoken.

"Anywaysâ€¦ with this chant, the three priests, as they seemed to be, cast a spell upon the cluster of three towns surrounding and including Urda. These towns would become known as Verdandi and Skuld, this town being Verdandi. Ever since then, the priests have resided in a temple that they built just outside of each town, one for each priest. The head priest seems to have taken up residence in the temple of Urda."

"Waitâ€¦ how long ago was this?" Fishlegs interjected.

"Ohhhâ€¦ it must have been at least a few hundred years, if not a few thousand."

"And they're still alive?!"

"They seem to have not aged a day, at least not in the way they move. They may as well be completely different people for all I know, but they seem to be the same people. Anywaysâ€¦ upon each town was placed a curse. Our fine town has been permanently separated from the rest of the world in a fashion unimaginable. Time travels slightly slower in this town than in the rest of the world, but we age the same way."

"Interestingâ€¦ and the temples are still there?"

"Of course."

"And what curses the other towns?"

"I know not," the barkeeper replied.

"Wellâ€¦ I'm going to have to sleep on this. May I have a room?"

"First room on the left, upstairs. It's on the house for tonight." And the bartender handed Fishlegs the key.

"Thank you." Fishlegs walked out and into the alley Toothless was hiding in. "Toothless, go hide about a mile outside of the town and come back here at dawn, there are weird things going on here."

And with that Toothless ran off into the night. Fishlegs walked back into the town and went to his room, retiring for the night.

Neither of them had noticed the pair of yellow eyes watching them from the blackness of the cool, dark alley.

* * *

><p>Please, I cannot stress this enough: reviewâ€¦"I need to know how I'm doing so I can make last minute decisions about the story as I'm writing it. Thanks.

**I want to apologize for anyone that read this and the horizontal lines were not in place; my computer is being funky with the

formatting.**

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5. The Towers

YAAAY CHAPTER 5 IS UP. It's kind of short but I decided to cut off the last few parts to save for Ch. 6 and wrote in the very ending of this about 5 minutes before I submitted it :p. Why can't writing be a decisive process? but noooo it's gotta be like "ooooh how bout this... no that... or all of them simultaneously!" grrrrr... oh well. ENJOY!

* * *

><p>CHAPTER 5: THE TOWERS<p>

* * *

><p>The air was dank. Hiccup and Astrid couldn't see much in the darkness, but the very air around them seemed to permeate with a sense of dread. The air of the early fall was chilling to the very bone.<p>

Hiccup could see the faint silhouette of a large, black spire towering up to the heavens. They both gazed at it with a sense of dread. Whatever it was that took residence in this so-called temple was nothing of good nature.

"Hiccup," Astrid said shakily, truly afraid for the first time in her life. "canâ€"can we go back? We could come back here in the morning."

Hiccup was trying to barrel through his own fears, but the sound of Astrid's voice nearly broke him, destroying almost every ounce of courage that he had built up for this moment. "No," he started sternly, "we have to do this. We have to. There's no other choice. We have to." He was saying this more to himself than he was to her he realized.

"Hiccup, I'mâ€"

"I know," he interrupted. "I am too. You have to fight it. I know you can."

"I . . ." she stared at him with adoration. He had grown so much in the past year, although only she could see it.

Astrid's bright blue eyes twinkled at Hiccup through the fog of the night. Hiccup gazed back at her. Astrid found comfort in the deep green of Hiccup's eyes. They gazed into each others eyes for a while, allowing all of the unspoken emotion from the past year to bubble outwards.

Astrid looked away for but a moment, a burst of sadness surging through her. What if the worst were to happen. She couldn't imagine life without her Hiccup.

Hiccup wrapped his arms around her delicately, comforting her. She shot her eyes up at him and looked for but a second before kissing him. She poured every ounce of emotion that she had bottled up for the past year into that moment.

Only a moment had passed. But it felt like an eternity. "Astrid . . . Iâ€"

She held up a finger to his lips. "You can tell me after we get back to the town."

Hiccup smiled when she said this, but he could not help feeling that something was wrong hereâ€"something besides the temple, and the air, and the mysterious man. He could not help feeling as though what he was about to do would lead to a choice that would change the course of the world forever.

* * *

><p>Tuffnut led Ruffnut and Snotlout through the woods, closer and closer to the endless prairie. Each of their dragons trailed close behind.<p>

The grass ripples in the wind as they ran over it. They seemed to be swept over its swaying blades. They carried on like this, thinking of nothing but traversing as much land as they could in the shortest amount of time possible.

"Guysâ€"waitâ€"whyâ€"why are we runningâ€"soâ€"so fast?" Snotlout gasped, completely out of breath.

Ruffnut and Tuffnut stopped abruptly. "Uhh . . . I don't know," Tuffnut said gruffly.

"Well then why are you making us Run?! Dipwad," Ruffnut said, punching him in the gut.

Tuffnut grunted from the hit, but said nothing in return. Instead, he started kicking at her, initiating a small brawl.

"Wait, Snotlout said, interrupting the twins' fight, "What is that?!"

They all stared up at a large, black spire towering up into the blackness of the night. If not for the sharp jagged void it created on the backdrop of the stars, they never would have seen it.

"Woooah . . ." Tuffnut adored, tilting his neck up uncomfortably to see the very top of it.

"I don't see what's so great about it," Ruffnut announced rather plainly. "It's just a big, black tower."

"A big, black tower in the middle of nowhere!" Snotlout yelled, amazed at how out of place it was.

"Let's go see if there's a way inside!" Tuffnut yelled, running towards the tower briskly.

Ruffnut ran after him eagerly, but Snotlout did so very reluctantly.

He could sense something very bad about this place. He wasn't afraidâ€”he never got afraidâ€”but something bad was going to happen; he just knew it.

* * *

><p>Toothless laid in the alley next to the tavern. Darkness consumed his body to the point where no one would be able to notice him until they got so close as to walk right into him. So he rested, staring off into the moonlit street. Occasionally he would see a person walk by, usually either into or out of the tavern.<p>

He wished that Hiccup were there with him, so he could share his feelings with him. He wished that he could rest now and be done with this endless searching. He wished he could just go home.

Toothless gazed up toward the endless night sky. A few stars twinkled brightly. A nearly full moon gave off the only light for that dark night. Fishlegs had told him to go hide a mile or so out of town so no one would find him, but how was he supposed to do that? The only way he could get out of the town would be to walk straight out; he couldn't fly. His best option was to simply lay here and try to sleep, waiting for Fishlegs to come get him so they could go to wherever it was he wanted to go.

And so he laid there, restless for now. What was it that Fishlegs had learned in the tavern? He could not have found out where Hiccup was. If he had, they would have left immediately.

He had said that, "Weird things were going on." But what could those things be. What could possibly be important enough to draw his attention, yet not be important enough to concern themselves with the matter immediately. Toothless had a lack of understanding of this strictly human sense of priorities.

Finally, Toothless felt himself drifting off to sleep. He allowed his mind to drift to thoughts of flying with his closest companion. He could almost feel the air swirling around him. And so he became lost in the land of dreams.

* * *

><p>Tuffnut stood idly at what must have been the front of the spire. A large door loomed in front of him. It was tall enough for at least twelve people, but wide enough for maybe two or three.<p>

He reached out for the large, spiked handle in front of him and pushed at it as hard as he could, having no success in opening it. He turned around casually and looked at Snotlout. "I think it's locked," he said.

"And you think I have a key?!" Snotlout replied sarcastically.

Ruffnut walked up to the door and pulled the handle lightly. As she did, the door opened with an echoing crack. "Moron," she said to her brother, punching him in the arm.

"How was I supposed to know you had to pull it?!" he yelled.

"There's a big handle on it!" she yelled back.

"Whatever."

Snotlout had noticed something in their small argument. The twins still fought often, but Ruffnut was much less involved than she used to be. She seemed simply exasperated with her brother now, rather than provoked by him. Now that he thought about it, she had been growing more and more like this for a few months now.

How had he noticed this anyways? What had led him to this sudden realization?

As he looked at her, he saw it: a small gleam in her eye. Sadness? Sorrow? Whatever it may be, it was there, and it meant something.

Ruffnut happened to look at him, and a small smile appeared on her face before she jerked her head away as soon as she saw his eyes on her.

Snotlout grinned to himself. He wasn't entirely sure why.

* * *

><p>Hiccup looked at the gate of the temple, gazing upon it with a ull fear. A large, spiked handle longer than his body hung right in front of him. "Are you ready?" he asked Astrid.<p>

"No, but we may as well go anyways," she answered shakily.

Hiccup sighed and placed his hand on the handle. He pulled at it, taken aback at how easily the door glided open. He glanced at Astrid, absorbing everything he could in a mere moment. Her eyes were gleaming with small tears. He could see her hands trembling almost imperceptibly. Hiccup wrapped his arms around her and kissed her gently. Tears began streaming from her eyes.

"It's going to be alright," he whispered into her ear.

Astrid backed away, holding Hiccup's hands in hers. The tears were subsiding, but he could still see that she was upset. "Let's just get this over with," she said, forcing her voice to be steady. She stepped around him and walked into the tower, darkness consuming her. Before Hiccup could follow her, the door slammed shut. Hiccup stood there stunned for a moment.

"Astrid!"

There was no reply.

"Astrid!" Hiccup screamed, slamming himself into the door.

Nothing.

She was gone.

* * *

><p>Things should be fairly regular from now on. About every 2-3 weeks I should have a chapter. (the longer it it takes the longer it'll be though so it's a win win :D) Review please.

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End
file.